

THE
Moral and Religious Cabinet.

"To aid the cause of Virtue and Religion."

Vol. I.

SATURDAY, APRIL 2, 1808.

No. 14.

**STRIKING EVIDENCES OF THE DIVINITY OF THE
SCRIPTURES.**

(Concluded from page 198.)

**II. EXAMPLES OF PERSONS RECOVERED FROM
THEIR INFIDELITY.**

1. CHARLES GILDON, author of a book called the *Oracles of Reason*, was convinced of the fallacy of his own arguments against religion, and the danger of his situation by reading Leslie's *Short Method with a Deist*. He afterwards wrote a defence of revealed religion entitled, *The Deist's Manuel*, and died in the christian faith.

2. Sir John Pringle, one of the first characters of the present age, though blessed with a religious education, contracted the principles of infidelity, when he came to travel abroad in the world. But as he scorned to be an implicit believer, he was equally averse to being an implicit unbeliever. He, therefore, set himself to examine the principles of the gospel of Christ, with all caution and seriousness. The result of his investigation was, a full conviction of the divine origin and authority of the gospel. The evidence of revelation appeared to him to be solid and invincible ; and the nature of it to be such as demanded his warmest acceptance.

3. Soame Jenyns, Esq. member of parliament for Cambridge, by some means had been warped aside into the paths of infidelity, and continued in this state of mind some years. Finding his mind however, not at rest, he was induced to examine the grounds upon which his unbelief was founded, He discovered his

error ; was led to believe in the Saviour of mankind ; and wrote a small treatise in defence of the gospel, entitled, a View of the internal Evidences of Christianity ; a work worthy the perusal of every man who wishes to understand the excellency of the religion he professes.

4. Doctor Oliver, a noted physician at Bath, was a zealous unbeliever till within a short time of his death. Being convinced of his error, and the danger of his situation, he bewailed his past conduct with strong compunction of heart, and gave up his spirit at last, in confident expectation of mercy from God, through the merit of that Saviour, whom, for many years, he had ridiculed and opposed. "O," said he "that I could undo the mischief that I have done ! I was more ardent to poison people with the principles of irreligion and unbelief, than almost any christian can be to spread the doctrines of Christ."

5. General Dykern received a mortal wound at the battle of Bergen in Germany, A. D. 1759. He was of a noble family, and possessed equal abilities as a minister in the closet, and a general in the field, being favoured with a liberal education. Having imbibed the principles of infidelity, by some means or other, he continued a professed deist, till the time he received his fatal wound. During his illness, however, a great and effectual change was wrought upon his mind by the power of divine grace, and he died in the full assurance of faith, glorifying in the salvation of Jesus, and wondering at the happy change which had taken place in his soul.

6. John, earl of Rochester, it is well known, was one of the wickedest and wittiest men in the kingdom. The hand of God, however, being upon him, he was brought to a deep sense of the danger of his situation, and abhorred himself, repenting in dust and ashes. After this, he acknowledged, that all the seeming absurdities in holy scripture, fancied by men of corrupt and reprobate judgments, were vanished, and that their excellency

and beauty appeared, now that he was come to receive the truth in the love of it.—“ I shall now die,” said he at last, “ but Oh ! what unspeakable glories do I feel ? what joys beyond thought or expression am I sensible of ! I am assured of God’s mercy to me, through Jesus Christ. Oh ! how I long to die, and to be with my Saviour !”

For the admonition of others, and to undo, as much as was in his power, the mischief of his former conduct, he subscribed the following recantation, and ordered it to be published after his death :

“ For the benefit of all those whom I may have drawn into sin by my example and encouragement, I leave to the world this my last declaration, which I deliver in the presence of the great God, who knows the secrets of all hearts, and before whom I am now appearing to be judged : That from the bottom of my soul, I detest and abhor the whole course of my former wicked life ; that I think I can never sufficiently admire the goodness of God, who has given me a true sense of my pernicious opinions and vile practices, by which I have hitherto lived without hope, and without God in the world ; have been an open enemy to Jesus Christ, doing the utmost despite to the Holy Spirit of grace : and that the greatest testimony of my charity to such, is, to warn them, in the name of God, as they regard the welfare of their immortal souls, no more to deny his being or his providence, or despise his goodness ; no more to make a mock at sin, or contemn the pure and excellent religion of my ever blessed Redeemer, through whose merits alone I, one of the greatest sinners, do yet hope for mercy and forgiveness. Amen.”

7. Captain John Lee, who was executed for forgery, March 4, 1784, became an infidel, through reading the elegant, but sophistical writings of David Hume. Deeply, however, did he repent his folly, when he came to be in distressed circumstances. “ I leave to the world,” said he in a letter to a friend the night

before his execution, “ this mournful memento, that however much a man may be favoured by personal qualifications, or distinguished by mental endowments, genius will be useless, and abilities avail but little, unless accompanied by a sense of religion, and attended by the practice of virtue.”

III. EXAMPLES OF DYING CHRISTIANS.

1. JOSEPH ADDISON, Esq. was a very able and elegant advocate for the bible, in life and death. Just before his departure, having sent for a young nobleman nearly related to him who requested to know his dying commands—his answer was—“ See in what peace a christian can die !”

2. Dr. John Leland, after spending a long and exemplary life in the service of the gospel, closed it with the following words : “ I give my dying testimony to the truth of Christianity. The promises of the gospel, are my support and consolation. They alone yield me satisfaction in a dying hour. I am not afraid to die. The gospel of Christ has raised me above the fear of death, for I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

3. Monsieur Pascal was a great man in every way, and one of the most humble and devout believers in Jesus that ever lived. The celebrated Bayle saith of his life, that “ an hundred volumes of sermons are not worth so much as this single life, and are far less capable of disarming men of impiety. The extraordinary humility and devotion of Monsieur Pascal gives a more sensible mortification to the libertines of the age, than if one was to let loose upon them a dozen of missionaries. They can now no longer attack us with their favourite and darling objection, that there are none but little narrow spirits, who profess themselves the votaries of piety and religion : for we can now boldly tell them, that both the maxims and practice thereof have been pushed on to the strongest degree, and carried to the greatest height, by one of the profoundest geometricians, by one of the most sub-

tle metaphysicians, and by one of the most solid and penetrating genii that ever yet existed on this earth."

4. Olympia Fulvia Morata was one of the earliest and brightest ornaments of the reformation. She could declaim in Latin, converse in Greek, and was a critic in the most difficult classics. But after it pleased God by his grace to open the eyes of her mind to discover the truth, she became enamoured of the sacred scriptures above all other books in the world, and studied them by day and by night. And when dissolution approached, she declared she felt nothing but "an inexpressible tranquility and peace with God through Jesus Christ." Her mouth was full of praises of God, and she emphatically expressed herself by saying, "I am nothing but joy."

5. William, lord Russel, delivered himself, just before his execution, in the strongest terms of faith and confidence. Besides many other things he said : "Neither my imprisonment, nor fear of death hath been able to discompose me in any degree. On the contrary, I have found the assurances of the love and mercy of God, in and through my blessed Redeemer ; in whom I only trust. And I do not question but I am going to partake of that fullness of joy, which is in his presence ; the hopes of which do so wonderfully delight me, that I think this is the happiest time of my life, though others may look upon it as the saddest."

6. Charles the fifth, emperor of Germany, king of Spain, and lord of the Netherlands, after having alarmed and agitated all Europe for near 50 years, retired from the world, and enjoyed more complete contentment in this situation than all his grandeur had ever yielded him. I have tasted, said he," "more satisfaction in my solitude, in one day, than in all the triumphs of my former reign ; and I find that the sincere study, profession, and practice of the christian religion, hath in it such joys and sweetness as courts are strangers to."

7. Mr. Selden, the famous lawyer, whom Grotius calls “the glory of the English nation,” was, as Sir Matthew Hale declared, a resolved, serious christian, and a great adversary to Hobbes’s errors.” He was generally considered as one of the most eminent philosophers, and most learned men of his time. He had taken a diligent survey of all kinds of learning, and had read as much perhaps as any man ever did; and yet toward the latter end of his days, he declared to archbishop Usher, that notwithstanding he had been so laborious in his enquiries, and curious in his collections, and had possessed himself of a treasure of books and manuscripts upon all ancient subjects; yet “he could rest his soul upon none, save the scriptures.” This is a perfect eulogium on the sacred volume.

8. Oxenstiern was chancellor of Sweden, and one of the most able and learned men of his time, and yet he was not too great and too wise to be above being taught by the sacred writings. “After all my troubles and toilings in the world,” says he, “I find that my private life in the country has afforded me more contentment, than ever I met with in all my public employments. I have lately applied myself to the study of the bible, wherein all wisdom, and the greatest delights, are to be found. I therefore counsel you (the English ambassador) to make the study and practice of the Word of God your chief contentment and delight, as indeed it will be to every soul that favours the truth of God, which infinitely excel all worldly things.”

9. Monsieur Claude was a very considerable man among the Protestants who were driven out of France by Lewis the fourteenth. When he was taken ill he sent for the senior pastor of the church, to whom he spoke highly of the christian religion, and then added,—I was desirous to see you, to make my dying declaration before you. I am a miserable sinner before God. I most heartily beseech him to shew me mercy for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. I hope he will hear my prayer. He has promised to hear the cries of repenting sinners. I adore him for

blessing my ministry. It has not been fruitless in his church; it is an effect of God's grace, and I adore his providence for it."

10. The Rev. James Hervey is well known to have been an elegant scholar, and a believer in the bible, with its most distinguishing truths. When he apprehended himself to be near the close of life, and stood, as it were on the brink of the grave, with eternity full in view, he wrote to a friend at a distance to tell him what were his sentiments in that awful situation. "I have been too fond," says he, "of reading every thing valuable and elegant that has been penned in our language, and been peculiarly charmed with the historians, orators, and poets of antiquity; but were I to renew my studies, I would take leave of those accomplished trifles; I would resign the delights of modern wits, amusement and eloquence, and devote my attention to the scriptures of truth. I would sit with much greater assiduity at my divine Master's feet, and desire to know nothing in comparison of Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

After this, when his dissolution drew still nearer, he said to those about him: "How thankful am I for death! It is the passage to the Lord and Giver of eternal life. O welcome, welcome death! Thou mayest well be reckoned among the treasures of the christian! To live is Christ, but to die is gain! Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy most holy and comfortable word; for mine eyes have seen thy precious salvation."

11. The late Rev. William Romaine was a zealous and successful preacher of the gospel of Jesus, and adorned it by a suitable character above fifty years. In his last illness not one fretful or murmuring word ever escaped his lips. "I have," said he, "the peace of God in my conscience, and the love of God in my heart. I knew before the doctrines I preached to be truths, but I now experience them to be blessings. Jesus is more precious than rubies, and all that can be desired upon earth is not to be compa-

red to him." He was in full possession of his mental powers to the last moment, and near his dissolution cried out, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty ! Glory be to thee on high, for such peace on earth, and good will to men."

Now, my friends and countrymen, these are all so many well attested matters of fact. Most of the persons mentioned were of the first reputation in their respective spheres of action. It would be prudent to review the whole ; to compare the several instances ; and weigh thoroughly the issue. For though it is not our province to determine the final fates of men, we may, from such comparisons, see clearly, whose situation is most eligible at the close of life, and whose case stands fairest for future felicity. Extremely weak, therefore, would it be, to let any man sneer us out of our bible, our Redeemer, and our salvation. Did we ever know a person lament, when he came to die, that he had taken too much care to serve his Creator, and save his soul alive ? Did we ever hear of a deist, who gloried, in his departing moments, that he had been favoured with success in making converts to the principles of infidelity ? Or did we ever see a sound scholar, who was, at the same time, a chaste, temperate, moral, and conscientious man, that lived and died an unbeliever ? Instances of a contrary nature we have known many, but rarely one, which comes up to this description. Persons of an affected liberality of mind, indeed, are frequently found, who hector, domineer, and speak great swelling words of vanity, while health and prosperity smile upon them ; but they generally lose their courage, and appear to infinite disadvantage, when death and judgment stare them in the face. If their souls are not harrowed up with horror, as in the cases of Voltaire, Newport, Altamont, and others ; at best they are sullen, gloomy, disconsolate, like Hobbes and many others ; or, having their consciences seared as with an hot iron, they are insensible to the vast realities of the invisible world, brave it out, and sport blindfold on the brink of destruction, after the manner of Servin, Hume, Emmerson, and several of the late French philosophers.

ANECDOTES OF THE REV. JOHN THORPE, OF MASBO- ROUGH, NEAR ROTHERHAM, YORKSHIRE.

THE Town of Rotherham, and its environs, had, for a considerable time, been ranked by serious people, among those parts of Yorkshire, which were least inclined to favour the spread of evangelical Religion; and when Messrs. Whitefield, Wesley, and others, attempted to disseminate divine knowledge in that neighbourhood, their persons and message were treated in general, with the greatest contempt. The propagation of malicious falsehoods was encouraged, with design to counteract the good effects of their ministry. Mr. Thorpe ranged under the standard of their most virulent opposers; and not content with personal insult, added private ridicule to public interruption. Ale-houses became theatres, where the fate of religious opinions was to be determined.

It was at one of these convivial resorts, that Mr. Thorpe and three of his associates, to enliven the company, undertook to mimic the Methodist preachers. The proposition was highly gratifying to all the parties present, and a wager agreed upon, to inspire each individual with a desire of excelling in this impious attempt. That their jovial auditors might adjudge the prize to the most adroit performer, it was concluded that each should open the Bible, and hold forth from the first text that should present itself to his eye. Accordingly three in their turn mounted the table, and entertained their wicked companions, at the expence of every thing sacred. When they had exhausted their little stock of buffoonery, it devolved on Mr. Thorpe to close this very irreverent scene. Much elated, and confident of success, he exclaimed as he ascended the table, "I shall beat you all!"

When the Bible was handed to him, he had not the slightest preconception, what part of the Scriptures he should make the subject of his banter. However, by the guidance of Providence, it opened at that remarkable passage, Luke, xiii. 3. " Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." No sooner had he uttered

the words, than his mind was affected in a very extraordinary manner. The sharpest pangs of conviction now seized him, and conscience denounced tremendous vengeance upon his soul. In a moment, he had a clear view of his subject, and divided his discourse more like a divine, who had been accustomed to speak on portions of Scripture, than like one who never so much as thought on religious topics, except for the purpose of ridicule ! He found no deficiency of matter, nor want of utterance, and he has often declared, " If ever I preached in my life, by the assistance of the Spirit of God, it was at that time." The impression that the subject made upon his own mind, had such an effect upon his manner, that the most ignorant and profane could not but perceive that what he had spoken was with the greatest sincerity.

The unexpected solemnity and pertinency of his address, instead of entertaining the company, first spread a visible depression, and afterwards a sullen gloom, upon every countenance. This sudden change in the complexion of his associates did not a little conduce to increase the convictions of his own bosom. No individual appeared disposed to interrupt him ; but, on the contrary, their attention was deeply engaged with the pointedness of his remarks ; yea, many of his sentences, made, to his apprehension, his own hair to stand erect !

When he left the table not a syllable was uttered concerning the wager ; but a profound silence pervaded the company. Mr. Thorpe immediately withdrew, without taking the least notice of any one present ; and returned home, with very painful reflections, and in the deepest distress. Happily for him, this was his last bacchanalian revel : His impressions were manifestly genuine ; and from that period, the connexion between him and his former companions was entirely dissolved. Thus, by divine grace, " the prey was taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered!"

Hell mourns sincere, as for an only son !

A captive lost—and Heaven the prize has won !

The people whom he had before so frequently reviled, became now the objects of his delight. He sought their company with avidity ; and, soon after, was joined to Mr. Wesley's society. He continued more than two years in a disconsolate and desponding state ; but that God who comforteth those that are cast down, was pleased, after he had showed him great and sore troubles, to take off his sackcloth, and gird him with gladness. His habitual seriousness, and uniform morality, soon endeared him to his new connexions, and he was appointed by Mr. Wesley, to preach the faith which he once attempted to destroy. His abilities were generally considered to be above mediocrity ; and in his itinerant labours he was both acceptable and successful wherever he went.

When Mr. Thorpe had preached about two years, he was uncommonly harrassed with temptations to atheism. These continued, a few intervals excepted, many months. His distress sometimes upon this account was so great, as to embarrass his mind beyond description. At length, however, he was happily delivered, by the following occurrence. Passing through a wood, with a design to preach in a neighbouring village, while he was swinging his hand, a leaf accidentally stuck between his fingers. He instantly felt a powerful impression on his mind, to examine the texture of the leaf. Holding it between his eye and the sun, and reflecting upon its exquisitely curious and wonderful formation, he was led into an extensive contemplation on the works of creation. Tracing these back to their first cause, he had, in a moment such a conviction of the existence and ineffable perfections of God, which then appeared in every spire of grass, that his distress was immediately removed, and he prosecuted his journey, rejoicing in God, and admiring him in every object that presented itself to his view.

When Mr. Thrope quitted the itinerant line, he settled at Marsborough, being chosen pastor of the Independent Church at that place. He died in 1776. The church consisted at his death of

45 members. His successor gives this testimony concerning him, that "he was a very holy man; much respected during the whole of his life; made a glorious end, and that his memory will long continue dear to the people of his charge.

ON INTEMPERENCE IN DRINKING.

IF, as Dr. Johnson observes, Shakespeare sacrifices virtue to convenience, and seems to write without any moral purpose, what might we say of Kotzebue, and other German infidels, who adorn vice with the attributes of religion, and call *evil good, and good evil*, and with whose writings so many persons have been so greatly captivated? It must be admitted, however, that amidst much ribaldry and profaneness, many striking expressions dropped from the pen of Shakespeare, and it is scarcely possible to use stronger language against drunkenness, than that which is contained in the motto of this paper.

Drunkenness is the besetting sin of thousands of persons, who yet are seldom seen to stagger in the streets. There is a habit of regular, private drinking, which is very common, and which often begins early in life. The late Dr. Cullen used to mention, in his public lectures, a family, who were all in the habit of taking a *dram* at a certain hour before dinner. When the doctor expressed his surprise at the practice, they acknowledged, that if they did not get the usual dram, they felt a considerable *sense of consciousness*. In plain English, they found themselves low-spirited for want of their cordial. It is more than probable, that the whole of them turned out drunkards.

Many persons, who will not drink Geneva or Brandy, fly to OPIUM when their spirits are low. But the custom of taking Opium can no more be vindicated than dram-drinking, and its effects are nearly the same.

Mr. Cambden, in his Annals under the year 1581, says, that the English first learned in the wars, in the Netherlands, to swallow a large quantity of intoxicating liquor, and to destroy their own health by drinking that of others. The Roman armies were allowed only vinegar and water to drink in all their expeditions, and yet they conquered the world !

A drunken man is not only levelled with the brutes, but loses the respect of brutes. Doctor Trotter, a Physician in the Navy, gives us two instances in proof of this. A man, returning home at night, when beastly drunk, was attacked by his own house-dog. The dog had observed such a change in his master's voice and appearance, that he probably took him for a hog, or a thief.—A gentleman, getting drunk in his own house, went to take the air in his garden, where he was observed by some favourite pointers; but instead of fawning in their usual manner, they set upon him with great fury; and, *Acteon* like, he was hunted by his own pack. The consequences might have been fatal, had not his screams brought his servants to his assistance.

The tragical end of some drunkards is not much unlike that of *Elpenor*, as given in the tenth book of the *Odyssey*.

A vulgar soul,
Born but to banquet, and to drain the bowl.
He, hot and careless, on a turret's height,
With sleep repair'd the long debauch of night:
The sudden tumult stirr'd him where he lay,
And down he hasten'd, but forgot the way;
Full headlong from the roof the sleeper fell,
And snapp'd the spinal joint, and wak'd in hell. POPE.

My whole experience, says Dr. Trotter, assures me, that wine is no friend to vigour, or activity of mind. It leaves body and soul in a state of listless indolence. In a survey of my whole acquaintance, I find that the *water-drinkers* possess the most equi-

tempers, and cheerful dispositions. But this does not exclude the temperate use of wine, when it is necessary.

A custom has long prevailed in this country of drinking wine while at dinner. This is downright pampering. It vitiates the taste, and destroys healthful appetite. The custom ought to be proscribed among all religious people immediately.

We will conclude with Dr. Trotter's relation of the effects of intemperate drinking on one of his friends.

" There is a gradation in vice, and few persons fall into the habit of drunkenness all at once. Some struggles of sensibility, some compunctuous visitings must attend the transition from sobriety to drunkenness. A few years ago, I met an old and once-valued friend ; but he made no advances to speak to me. I observed, that he was more slovenly in his dress than usual, and his face was rather bloated. I requested the favour of his company to dinner, to which he agreed in an embarrassed manner, and came. But, alas ! *quantum mutatus ab illo !* At dinner his conversation was all broken sentences ; his fine literary taste was gone ; and the feast of reason, and the flow of soul, had no share in our entertainment. He drank incessantly of sherry, and filled bumpers every time. I was called out of the room, and before I returned, he had finished another bottle. It is painful to add, that in a few weeks he was confined in a mad-house !

IMMORAL CONDUCT OF PROFESSORS, A CAUSE OF INFIDELITY.

The general wickedness and immoral conduct of some christians, so called, is a grand cause of infidelity. For let men profess what they will, they never can persuade any thinking person that they believe their own principles, while they are seen to transgress every rule of moral and religious obligation, and in various transactions between man and man, conduct themselves in a manner, of which abundance of the heathen, both ancient and modern, would be ashamed.

A FATAL MISTAKE.

THE mistake is this ; that Christians may reckon themselves secure of the favour of God, if they are not guilty of cheating, uncleanness, drinking, robbing, and murdering. This is the error of the ignorant ; and the artful flatter them in it, telling them, that if they do but lead what they call good lives, articles of faith are but matters of opinion, and therefore they need not be nice about their creed. To make this plausible notion the more agreeable, one of our poets, (who was never troubled with much religion) has put it into rhyme :

“ For modes of faith, let senseless zealots fight ;
His can’t be wrong, whose life is in the right.”

But a right life can no more grow upon a wrong faith, than grapes can grow upon thistles. This is true for more reasons than one ; but chiefly because the worst sort of wickedness is the wickedness of the mind against God.

Consider the character of the Devil : he is a *spirit*, and therefore cannot commit the sins of the body. He is no glutton, no drunkard, no miser, no adulterer ; his wickedness is all of a spiritual kind ; or, in other words, it is the wickedness not of the body, but of the spirit. It consists in opposing the wisdom of God, perverting his word, misrepresenting his justice, despising his incarnation, suggesting evil thoughts to men, promoting heresies, and dividing the church of Christ : in a word, it is the business of the apostate spirit to counterwork the ways of the Divine Spirit, by all the efforts of subtlety, falsehood, pride, malice, and contradiction. Therefore he who opposes God, as the Devil doth, is the disciple and minister of the Devil ; and if he does the same work, what can be expected but that he will receive the same wages ?

Poetry.

HOPE IN THE LORD.

ALL this gloom thou canst dispel,
 All the darts of Satan quell.
 Counsel me, most holy **LORD** !
 Teach me thy unerring word ;
 Thy directing Spirit send,
 Thou ! my Saviour and my Friend !
 Breathe thine influence divine
 On this rebel heart of mine ;
 Every wish and thought remove
 Savouring not of heavenly Love.
 —Child of Adam, heir of Sin,
 Frail, unholy, and unclean,
 Is there aught of good in me,
LORD ! it all belongs to Thee.
 All that Man, with erring eye,
 Thinks he can in me descry,
 Thou in very truth supply :
 Realize the partial praise,
 Righteous **LORD** ! thine honour raise :
 Give me what Thou canst approve,
 Make me all that Thou canst love.

ON PREACHING. *Dec 20th*

THE specious sermons of a *learned man*,
 Are little else but *flashes in the pan* ;
 The mere harranguing (upon what they call
Morality) is *powder without ball* :
 But he who preaches with a christian grace,
Fires at our vices, and the shot takes place.